

THE ⁸⁶⁹⁶
TRUE PRINCIPLE
UPON WHICH
SINNERS ARE SAVED.
A SERMON,

DELIVERED
IN ST. JAMES' CHURCH, LANCASTER,
PENNSYLVANIA, ON THE 5TH
DAY OF MAY, 1793.

BY ELISHA RIGG,
RECTOR OF SAID CHURCH. R

Blessed is he whose Transgression is forgiven, whose Sin is covered. Psalm xxxii. 1.

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TO THE
FAITHFUL IN CHRIST,
OF
EVERY DENOMINATION,
AS AN
EVIDENCE OF HIS EARNEST DESIRE
TO CONTRIBUTE TO
THEIR FULL ESTABLISHMENT
IN THE
BELIEF OF THE TRUTH;
THIS DISCOURSE
IS
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY
THE AUTHOR.



ADVETISEMENT.

THE words of the inspired penman, chosen for the text of the ensuing discourse, taken in connection with the context, appear to have been intended, by him, to confirm believers in the hope of the certainty of their deliverance from Divine wrath: For if, while we were yet enemies to God, he gave his Son to die for us; how much more now, being reconciled to him by the death of that Son, may we expect salvation from every evil? This is one use which the author of the following sheets intended to make of them, likewise. But they inculcating also (at least, by implication) the doctrine of man's guiltiness by nature,

and, of the blood of Jesus Christ being the meritorious cause of his justification before God; the author's whole plan was, to make these three important truths, the subjects of three separate sermons; having a reference to, and dependance on each other. When a copy of this, which is now offered to the world, was requested for publication; it became necessary, in order to make it appear an intire whole, of itself, to introduce, into the beginning of it, a few sentiments, from the one which preceded it in the course of preaching. And this is the chief reason, why it has not appeared, from the press, exactly in the same form in which it was delivered from the pulpit.

LANCASTER, *August* 20th, 1793.

T H E
TRUE PRINCIPLE, &c.

ROMANS V. 9.

*Much more then, being now justified by his
Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath
through Him.*

WHEN we hear of a reprieve being granted, by proper authority; that alone is sufficient to excite the idea in us, that the person, in whose behalf it has been granted, was under sentence of condemnation for the violation of some existing law. The words now read inform us, of an act of justification having been passed, in favour of the children of men. Shall not this information be sufficient evidence to inspire a conviction in this case, as well as in the aforementioned; that the children of men were under sentence of condemnation, on account of some demerit in them? Every candid mind will allow the one

to have equal weight with the other, in inducing a belief of the facts in its own case.

UPON the first transgression of the Divine command, that thing in which God chiefly delighted, his own holy image, departed from man. He became tarnished in his *glory* (a). A void was left in the soul. This was seized with a want of energy in all those actings for which it had been intended, and qualified. Feebleness, in the extreme, marked all its reasonings. It was liable to form wrong notions. An abundant proof of this, we have in Adam's attempt to hide himself, amongst the trees of the Garden, from that allseeing Eye, which discovers the secrets of hearts. In lifting itself up to God, the former object of its affections and trust, the soul found much difficulty. He appeared to be at a great remove from it indeed; to wear a different aspect from that in which he had at first been clothed; and to possess different properties from what he had manifested, when he conducted man into Eden, the place which he had prepared for his accommodation.

^a Psalm lvii. 8.

How it happened, that the soul should come to view God, its maker, in this light, can easily be accounted for. He remains the same unchangeable God, *yesterday, today, and forever*. But in itself was the change. It did, when first created, form a noble link in the chain of being. On it had been bestowed, by its allbountiful Father, a measure of excellence inferior, it is true, to what had been conferred on some; but far superior to what had been conferred on others of God's works. By yielding to the temptations of Satan, to rebel against God, it lost, as we just now hinted, a portion of the measure of its excellence; was thereby really degraded in its nature; and sunk below that place in the chain of being, which it had been created to occupy. And, on this account, there must, of necessity, be a greater distance between it and its God, the fountain of excellence, than existed, when it possessed more exalted qualities.

It has been contended by some (but they are chiefly such, as deny the unhappy effects of original sin on the posterity of Adam) that such a fall, from the primary glory and dignity of our nature,

has never taken place: And that man is as highly qualified, at present, to answer the end of his creation, as he was at the moment in which he first came out of the hand of his Maker.

BUT these opinions are false; and can be refuted by the concurrent testimony of fundry witnesses. Such as acknowledge the divine authority of the Bible, will not reject, in evidence to the truth of our fall, the voice of inspiration. Than this, nothing can be more express to the point. *God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions* (a). Many of the dispensations of God's providence, recorded in the Scripture, speak the same language. We shall only instance two of them. The sacrifices were ordained, under the Mosaic economy, as well to show the necessity of an atonement being made, for the guilt incurred by the fall, as to point out the only method by which it could be made. The washings that were appointed, were intended, not only to cleanse the flesh from legal pollution; but also to signify the necessity of cleansing the heart from moral impurity, by the blood, and sancti-

a Ecclesiastes vii. 29.

fyng influences of the Spirit, of Jesus Christ. These considerations will carry very great force with them, when we remember, that the whole ceremonial law, as it made nothing perfect, *was a shadow of good things to come.*

BUT our own experience bears testimony to the truth of our fall. Every man has a certain knowledge of what passes within himself: And this, he finds to be the very image of what he is greatly inclined to censure in a fellow mortal. The unseasonable and excessive risings of anger; a propensity to cherish inordinate affections; the swellings of pride; a readiness to divulge, to the world, whatever we know to the prejudice of our neighbour's character; impatience under the chastising hand of God, and a coldness in rendering homage to him; a thirst for human praise; the kindling of jealousy, where there is any thing like a competitor, or a competition; and a glowing to revenge all wrongs done us; with many other things, we all have, in a greater or less degree, to lament. By pursuing the measures, to their full extent, into which these evil desires would lead us, we should destroy

all that good order, peace, and happiness, which it is the will of God should reign amongst mankind. This being the natural state of man, he is obnoxious to Divine vengeance. *By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation* (a). Every mouth is stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Accordingly, sentence has been passed against us: The punishment fixed. Banishment, with *an everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power*, is our doom: And what have we, wherewith we can stay the execution of this sentence? Have we no price to offer for our deliverance? Are there no principles upon which a deliverance can be effected? Yes, my brethren, there is a way by which repenting sinners may escape eternal punishment: And, in defence of this way, we shall seldom draw any weapon but *the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*. The Scriptures declare in favour of a deliverance by the blood of Jesus Christ. *Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath, through him*. This is the price with which the favour of God can be purchased; the only consideration, on account of

a Romans v. 18,

which God will turn aside from his anger. Let us, therefore, flee unto Jesus, *the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things, than that of Abel.* The blood of Abel proclaimed aloud, that cruelty and guilt were in the world, marking their way with death. It cried to Heaven, the throne of equity, and to God, the judge of all, for vengeance on the offender. *The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground, saith the great Jehovah.*

BUT the blood of Jesus speaketh in more generous strains. It crieth not for vengeance on those who shed it, and for whom it was shed. On the contrary; it pleadeth for pardon and mercy in behalf of them, whose hands are imbrued therein. And is not this the case with each of us present today? How often have we, by voluntarily committing sin, *crucified the Son of God afresh?* And is it possible, that the blood of Jesus can plead, and prevail, in favour of such guilty wretches? Yes!—stupendous grace! *Being justified by his blood (says our text) we shall be saved from wrath.*

To be justified, is to be sustained righteous, and unblamable. Believers are sus-

B

tained righteous and unblamable in the sight of God, by that blood which was stipulated to be shed, in the covenant between the Father and the Son: That is, By the merit of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. In proof of this we will offer the words of St. Paul: *Who is it that condemneth? It is Christ that died* (a). Neither the malice of Satan, inflamed by disappointment; nor the greediness of Hell to devour; nor the law, in the utmost extent of its rigour; nor conscience, awakened to a faithful discharge of its office; can bring an accusation, or pronounce sentence of condemnation. These derived their authority, to lay to our charge, from sin. But the enmity of this is slain; the sting is extracted out of it; and, with respect to believers, it hath no longer a power to condemn: But *grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord* (b).

IN order to have a clearer notion of this doctrine, let us examine, particularly, into the meaning of the phrase, in our text, *Being justified by his blood*. In coming at the true import of it, we can be assisted by considering some of the dispensations

a Romans viii. 34.

b and v. 21.

of God's providence towards the Jewish church. When the great Jehovah separated the offspring of Jacob from the rest of mankind, he prescribed certain laws, which were to be peculiar to themselves. By these they were bound to regulate their conversation. He also appointed, that such and such beasts should be offered in sacrifice, as atonements, for such and such sins. The transgression of any of those laws stained the person, offending, with legal pollution. This rendered him unfit for any duty, until an atonement should be made. Of the kind of beast, therefore, which had been appointed to atone for the kind of sin, of which he had been convicted; he must take one: And, according to the ceremony instituted for that purpose, have the guilt, with which he stood charged, transferred on it. When the blood of the animal was shed, the offender, who had forfeited his life by his transgression, was spared: And, in the eyes of the law, the fullest demands of which were satisfied, by the substitution of this animal to suffer in his room; he was as innocent, with respect to that sin, as if he had never committed it. The animal sustained the punishment, which ought to have fallen on the man.

A KNOWLEDGE of this circumstance casts great light upon the phrase, in our text, *Being justified by Christ's blood*. Methinks some are ready to ask, "Why need the blood of Jesus be shed, if the slaying of beasts could make atonement? Could God take pleasure in cruelty of the highest kind; the punishment of an innocent, only son?" In answer to this, we reply, That there were many sins, for which no sacrifices, under the Mosaic economy, were appointed to atone. To publish the law to the Israelites, the Lord descended on Sinai in fire. The mountain was altogether on a smoke, and quaked greatly; the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder; and then, the voice of God was heard from the top of the mount. What occasion for all this solemnity, if the whole force, of what was then delivered, could be so easily avoided? There was a secret force, or spirituality, in the moral precepts, which many, who were well acquainted with the law of ordinances, knew nothing of. This St. Paul acknowledges to have been his case: *I was without the law once*. He was well acquainted with the ordinances and ceremonies of the Jewish religion; but knew nothing of the spirituality, extent, and sanc-

tions of the moral precepts, until his conversion to Christianity. God's anger was justly kindled against every sin: And can it be supposed, that he could be moved to part with it, in every instance, by the slaying of a few beasts; when *the cattle on a thousand hills are his?* when *the Earth is the Lord's* and all that it contains? By no means. But we must distinguish what is called, legal pollution, from moral guilt. The difference between these, is great. Legal pollution was contracted by violating those laws, which were peculiar to, and binding upon the Jewish people only; and which were to be done away by the death of Christ: But moral guilt is incurred by violating those eternal laws of truth, justice, righteousness, and holiness, which are founded in the unchangeable nature and perfections of God; and from acting in conformity to which, he cannot, in the slightest degree, recede. Moral guilt, which arises out of the crimes of murder, adultery, &c. was never expiated by the death of beasts. Could this have been the case, how would David have triumphed in it; after that, by the ministry of the prophet, Nathan, he had been awakened to a sense of the sinfulness of his conduct, in the case of Uriah? But whole herds

might have been killed in vain. Of this, he was well convinced. He perceived, that no relief could be gained in this way. *Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offerings.* Hence the death of Christ, in order to the salvation of sinners, appears to be indispensibly necessary.

WAS the guilt of the man, who had stained himself with legal pollution, transferred, by the appointment of God, on the devoted victim; which then felt the stroke of justice? And might not the offender, who was spared on the account of this animal being slain, be said to be justified, or acquitted, which is nearly the same thing in substance; by the blood of the sacrifice which he offered? Verily he might. In like manner all the moral guilt of the world, by the appointment of God, and with the voluntary consent of Christ, was transferred on Christ; *Who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree* (a). *For God hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (b).

FROM what has been said it appears, that man, for loading himself with moral

a 1 Peter ii, 24.

b 2 Corinthians v, 21.

guilt, was condemned, by the almighty God, to suffer the pains of eternal death. From this destiny he could not be saved, without a ransom: And where could a ransom be found? The life of no created being would be accepted of, as an atonement for moral guilt. Could he give *his firstborn for his transgression; the fruit of his body, for the sin of his soul*; it would be such a price as God required not at his hands. It, therefore, pleased the eternal Son, who was "begotten, not made," to become incarnate, and offer himself a sacrifice for us; that, by his blood, we might be justified, and saved from wrath through him.

OF the plan of salvation by a mediator, an inspired apostle hath beautifully spoken: *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them* (a). The whole of this scheme of reconciliation, was of his own devising. It occupied the divine Mind from all eternity: And the words of Abraham to his son, *God will provide himself a lamb*, have been completely fulfilled in this case. All is of God; nothing, of man. In the person of the son of Mary dwelled the fulness of the God-

head bodily. On the arm of this strength he leaned, whilst he was employed in settling the terms of our peace. And with the arms of this power, he incircles all believing souls, who ever did, or ever will fly to him for refuge. What a glorious process was this! What amazing condescension! But God's ways are not as our ways. We, to the reproach of our species, seek to revenge every affront and indignity offered us: God, when the greatest insult had been offered to him, did not deal with us as we deserved; but, according to his own great goodness. He accepted of a satisfaction from another; from an innocent; when he had it in his power to punish the guilty. Concerning this ransom of our lives, *Isaiah*, that prince of all the prophets, by a prophetic spirit, declared several hundred years before it came to pass; that *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed* (a). That stroke of vengeance which it was our due to have suffered, stained the cross with the blood of Jesus; and, *Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

a *Isaiah* liii. 5.

How complete the efficacy of this atonement! It hath *blotted out the handwriting of ordinances, that was against us* (a). Rejoice ye flocks and herds of the field; ye are now set free from the necessity of bleeding, to expiate the guilt of sin. No more shall your smoke ascend from the altars towards Heaven, perfumed with incense, that God may smell a sweet favour therein. No more shall the legal high priest enter, yearly, the holy place, with your blood, to offer it for himself, and the errors of the people. The great Antitype has come; and with his own blood has entered into the presence of God; *having obtained eternal redemption for man*. Ah, my brethren! no incense, of material composition, was here necessary. The Divine Nature was an altar, which sanctified the Humanity that was offered up; and God was well pleased in the death of his Son. *Being, therefore, justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him*.

THE doctrine of the salvation of sinners, from the wrath of God, being attainable only by the blood of Jesus Christ; can be clearly illustrated, by considering

some of the circumstances of the pass-over lamb, which was killed in Egypt. Was this simply an act of religious worship, the intire value of which lay in the obedience the Israelites rendered to God, by complying with his command? To consider it, solely, in this point of view, would do violence to the end designed to be answered by it. It was a typical thing; and, in its first institution, it partook of the nature of a sacrifice: But, through the whole succeeding period of time, during which the feast was annually kept, it served as a commemoration of that signal manifestation of God's loving kindness to the Israelites; when his destroying angel passed them over, and slew the firstborn of the Egyptians. As, without the shedding of blood, there could be no remission; so, without the sprinkling of the blood shed, there could be no sanctification. These few remarks render it abundantly evident, that it was not the act of their obedience to which God had respect, when he passed over the Israelites, and destroyed the firstborn of the Egyptians; but, to the blood of the lamb, which he saw sprinkled on the lintels, and two sideposts of their doors. This blood, in a sovereign manner, ex-

clusive of any motive, discoverable by human understanding, but his own will; he constituted the principle upon which he would spare them. The Scriptures declare the same sentiment, expressly. *And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: And, when I see the blood, I will pass over you, when I smite the land of Egypt (a). And again, When he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two sideposts of the door, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in to smite you.*

THESE passages leave no room to doubt of the truth of our assertion, that it was on account of the blood which God saw on the sideposts of the Israelites' doors; that he restrained the plague, which smote the firstborn of Egypt, from hurting them. And to attempt to aid the force of holy Scripture, by human argument, would be as vain a piece of conduct, as the propping of an iron pillar, with a bruised reed.

Now, it appears, from Newtestament language, that the whole ceremonial law was but *a shadow of good things to come.*

a Exodus xii. 13, 23.

The substance intended to be shadowed forth, by the killing of the passover lamb in Egypt, was, the real "sacrifice of the death of Christ." And the sprinkling of the blood of this lamb, on the entrance of the houses of the Israelites, with a bunch of Hyssop; prefigured the application of the blood of Jesus to our souls, by the divine Spirit, in the use of the ordinances of the Gospel. And as, in the shadow, the blood of the lamb was the only consideration, on account of which God passed over the Israelites; so, likewise, in the substance, the blood of Christ shed for guilty sinners, is the only principle upon which God acquits them, and spares them from eternal punishment.

IF, then, sinners are justified only by the blood of Jesus, as what has been said sufficiently proves; and, can be saved from wrath through none but him; how great is their mistake, who seek to be justified, and to save themselves, by works of moral righteousness? Can the fruits of a pious life atone for sins that are past? Perfect and perpetual obedience to the will of God, was required of Adam, before the fall, He

was also able to have walked uprightly. But what proportion can that imperfect obedience which we, in a state of corruption, are able to render, although it may be sincere, bear to the malignity of past sin; that God, on account of this service, should be moved to part with his anger, and lift upon us the light of his countenance? The pride of man may boast of the dignity of his nature, and the worth of his actions: But the lesson which our Lord teaches us, is, that when we have done to the utmost of our abilities, to say, we are *unprofitable servants*. Could we fulfil all that we are commanded to fulfil, as perfect and perpetual obedience was required of Adam, in a state of innocence; we should only come up to what would have been our duty, if we had never sinned in a single instance: And, therefore, have no overplus obedience or merit (if I may so speak) to offer, as an atonement for the very smallest of our past sins. But this is not all; for poor in good works is the very best of us. Like a cobweb spread before a hail storm, cut away in the twinkling of an eye, will the mantle of our own righteousness, with which we are so fond of covering ourselves, prove;

when God, in his anger, shall rain on us fire and tempest. Oh! how soon shall we be stripped of our own righteousness, which is as filthy rags, by that fire which *trieth every man's work of what sort it is*; and, brought naked into God's presence, ashamed and terrified! With what language ought the full persuasion of this truth to fill our mouths? *Lord, if thou shouldst mark iniquity against us, who can stand! We cannot answer thee for one sin of a thousand which we have committed.* And with what desires ought it to inspire our heart? It made St. Paul desire *to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness*. He knew, full well, that all to which he could lay any claim was mixed with imperfection and sin. He had once trusted in the law that he was righteous. But now, although a faithful warrior against the Prince of Darkness, and an hardy soldier in the cause of Christ; he would not venture, even on the best services he had ever rendered to God, for justification before him. He knew, "That good works, which are the
 "fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away sins, and endure
 "the severity of God's judgment (a)."

a Twelfth article of religion.

If they can never put away sins, and when weighed in God's balances they are found wanting, they cannot avail any thing in rendering our persons just before God. To some other consideration, therefore, we must have recourse, as the sole and exclusive reason of God's bestowing pardon and salvation on repenting sinners; and, of his revoking their sentence of condemnation. Any thing in themselves, we have seen, it cannot be; because, works that are pleasing and acceptable to God, through Christ, never go before, but follow after justification. And what more probable reason can we find, of God's acquitting us from guilt, than that for which we have been contending, viz. The merit of the obedience and sufferings of his own Son? This bears a full proportion to the prize to be obtained; the favour of God, and a crown of eternal glory: Therefore, *Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

I M P R O V E M E N T.

1. DID the manlayer under the law, when he had perpetrated the unhappy fact, escape, with all possible haste, to a city of refuge; terrified at what he had

done? Did the consciousness of his guilt, and a full persuasion that the avenger of blood, "a near kinsman of the deceased," would pursue to kill him; add swiftness to his flight? In like manner, have you, my hearers, convinced of your guilt; convinced of your many acts of rebellion against the revealed will of Heaven; ever fled to lay hold of the hope set before you, that you may escape the vengeance of God? Has it ever appeared to you, a righteous thing in God to take away your life, and banish your soul into the lake of torment; because it is defiled with sin? Whether you have viewed matters in this light, or no, it is the just desert both of you and me; if we have not been washed, and made clean in the blood of Jesus. The justice of God, like the avenger of blood, is at our heels, and will do the office of an executioner: Not of an executioner, who can only kill the body; but of one, who, as our Lord expresses it, when he has killed the body, can *destroy both body and soul in Hell.*

2. BUT, secondly, as the conduct of flying, for safety, to the blood whereby we are justified, is a wise, reasonable,

and consistent conduct; so the necessity of so doing is very great. The passover lamb had been killed in vain, if the blood of it had been spilled on the ground; and not sprinkled, according to the Lord's direction, on the sideposts of the doors where the Israelites were. Their first-born, as well as the firstborn of Pharaoh and his subjects, would have been destroyed. So, likewise, Christ will have died in vain, as to us, if we keep at a distance from him. He suffered on Calvary; He poured out his soul unto death; He was slain as the Lamb of God, to take away the sin of the world: But this will profit us nothing, unless we are made clean in the blood of this Lamb. There may be bread enough in the Father's house; and yet the absent, prodigal son suffer want. In Christ, also, there may be a sufficiency of merit to atone for all sin; yet many sinners, notwithstanding this, through delay, or total neglect of application, perish everlastingly. If these things are so, my brethren, let me address you in the language of Ananias to Saul; *Why tarry ye? Arise, come to Jesus, and wash away your sins.* But it may be asked, "How shall we come? You have sifted all merit out of the works of moral righteousness."

“ nefs, and what fhall we bring with us,
 “ to recommend us to favour ?” This
 leads me,

3. To remark, That it becomes us to place all things in their due order: Not fet one thing where another ought to ftand. We condemn not good works. We contend for a zealous performance of them: Not becaufe they are able to juftify our perfons; for this purpofe they were never defigned; but, becaufe *God hath before ordained that we fhould walk in them* (a). They are the highway along which we are to travel to the manfions of glory. Suppofe a great perfonage, at a diftance from home, fhould purchafe a fervant. From a preference to a particular road, which leads to the place of his refidence, he fets the fervant on it; gives him way-marks, by which to know when he is right, with a charge to turn neither to the right hand, nor to the left, on pain of his difpleafure, and fevere chaftifement. By every paffenger, who paffes that way, the mafter is informed, that the fervant travels on according to his directions. This faithfulnefs to his orders, and obedience to his will, impart fatisfaction to the ma-

ster, and prompt him to be liberal to the servant: Not because he has done more than was his duty to do; but because the master saw the impression 'made, by his commands, on the mind of the servant, corresponded as exactly to the features of his own mind, as an impression on wax answers to the marks of the seal which made it.

THE adorable God hath purchased the heirs of salvation, with no less a price than the blood of his own Son. Then he sets on the narrow path of holiness and righteousness, to lead them to Heaven; with a charge not to deviate from it. He who surveys all things and all places, at one and the same time, stands in no need of being informed, by any, at what place we are in the way. *His eyes are ever over the righteous*; and our prayers and alms are the best messengers we can send before us, to inform our great Master, that we are still marching on, in the path on which he at first set us. God, discovering in us a zealous desire to obey him, takes pleasure in us: Not because we have done more than was our duty to do; but because he sees in us something of his own image. And bestows on us a reward

of salvation and glory: Not on account of our meriting it; but because it is his good pleasure, for the sake of the death of Christ, to give it. God requires of us, and it is all he doth require, the strictest holiness: And this, not as a price for the pardon of our past sins; but, as a qualification for the enjoyment of Heaven, and the society of pure spirits. When you would come to God, you must bring with you Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and sinners; and offer him as the price of your acceptance with the Father: But, when you would come unto Jesus, wait not for fitness. “The only fitness he requires, is, to feel your need of him,” to make you good and happy. Come as you are, *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*; having *no confidence in the flesh*. Bring with you deep and unfeigned sorrow for your past offences. Claim an interest in the intercession of the Saviour, as a benefit you greatly stand in need of; pray unto God through him; and you will find grace to help you. His Name and Mediation are all-prevailing. He lives in his people, and makes them holy. *If the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, could put away le-*

gal pollution, or, in the words of St. Paul, *sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself, without spot, to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

Ah! my fellow-candidates for Eternity, here is laid open to our view, the true fountain from whence flow all Christian graces. The blood of Jesus is that fountain, which the prophet, Zechariah, predicted should be *opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; for sin, and for uncleanness.* In it, and in it alone, shall all the members of the “Church Universal *,” be washed, and cleansed from all impurity and defilement, and whatever is offensive to God. But its effects upon the soul stop not here. As a fountain diffuses a refreshing moisture through the Earth, to a considerable distance around it, which impregnates the ground with fruitful qualities; and sends forth its streams to perform the same kind office, perhaps, for an extensive tract through which they run: So, the soul, purged of all noxiousness by the

* By the “Church Universal” is to be understood, all the pious children of God, who ever lived, or ever shall live upon the Earth.

blood of sprinkling, and refreshed by the influences of the holy Spirit, like the gentle distillings of the dew upon the grass, shooteth forth all Christian graces; which appear, first in the tender blade; then, in the ear; and afterwards, in the full corn, in the ear. From this observe, that the Christian life is progressive. It is the privilege and happiness of the saints to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord. They go from one degree of strength to another. Be prevailed on, my hearers, to examine how the case stands with you. *Prove your own selves.* Have you now a clearer notion of the weakness of your own nature; a stronger attachment to God; a greater love to his service and people; and a better understanding of his Word, than you had years and months ago? If not, suspect the truth of your title to Heaven and happiness, and strive to amend. The apostle speaks of *babes in Christ*. What does he intend by this, but to characterise those, who are newly awakened to a sense of salvation being attainable only through his Name? Are there any such amongst you? Improve the talent well. It is an invaluable acquisition! A pearl of great price! Therefore, press forward,

until ye attain to the measure of the stature of perfect men in Him. Stay yourselves upon Him. He is a Saviour, able to supply all your wants, and to satisfy your most enlarged desires. In Him are hid all the treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge. He is the Cause, the Beginning, and the End of our conversion to God. He is made unto us Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption: And, *Being justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath through Him.* AMEN.



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